

IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PUBLIC SPEAKING PERFORMANCE USING ONLINE PEER FEEDBACK

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Every challenging work needs self-effort as well as love and encouragement from those who are very close to our heart. My humble effort I dedicate to:

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جزاك الله خيرا

“May Allah swt reward you (with) goodness

ABSTRACT

The ubiquitous use of peer feedback in a public speaking course is lending a new level of credence as an educational tool. However, little is known about its efficacy in an online environment. To address this gap, the present study investigated the usage of online peer feedback within an Online Public Speaking Course (OPSC) website which was developed to allow students to interact within the context of giving and receiving feedback and practicing their own public speaking. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, the study investigated i) types of online peer feedback, ii) students' experience of using these feedbacks, and iii) changes in the students' public speaking performance. Students were required to present public speaking, upload on the OPSC website for peers' feedback and revised their speech. Evaluation of the students' speech performance, online peer feedback record, students' journal entries and semi-structured focus group interview were the source of data collection. Results of the study showed firstly, students use three types of online peer feedback; Corrective, Motivational and Graphical feedback. Secondly, online peer feedback provided students the experience of i) better confidence level, ii) independent learning, iii) discussion among peers, and iv) infinite revision opportunities. Thirdly, online peer feedback improved students' engagement with the audience with better i) delivery and voice control skills, ii) language and proficiency skills, and iii) organized presentation skills. It is recommended that all public speaking instructors, teachers and trainers experience online peer feedback in public speaking course as the study has provided innovative ways in the methodology of public speaking skills.

ABSTRAK

Penggunaan kaedah maklumbalas rakan sebaya atau dikenali sebagai “*peer feedback*” dalam kursus pengucapan awam telah diiktiraf sebagai salah satu kaedah pengajaran yang berkesan. Walau bagaimanapun, amat sedikit diketahui tentang keberkesanannya dalam kaedah pembelajaran dalam talian. Untuk menangani jurang ini, kajian yang dijalankan menyelidik penggunaan maklumbalas rakan sebaya dalam laman web “*Online Public Speaking Course (OPSC)*” yang dibangunkan untuk membolehkan pelajar berinteraksi dalam konteks memberi maklum balas dan menerima maklum balas serta berlatih membuat pengucapan awam secara sendiri. Menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan kualitatif fenomenologi, kajian ini mengkaji i) jenis maklumbalas rakan sebaya dalam talian, ii) pengalaman pelajar dalam menggunakan maklumbalas ini dan iii) perubahan prestasi pengucapan awam pelajar. Pelajar dikehendaki membuat pengucapan awam, memuat naik pada laman web OPSC untuk menerima maklum balas rakan sebaya dan menyemak semula pengucapan mereka. Penilaian prestasi pengucapan awam pelajar, rekod maklumbalas rakan sebaya dalam talian, catatan jurnal pelajar dan temubual kumpulan tumpuan separa-berstruktur merupakan sumber pengumpulan data. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pertamanya; pelajar menggunakan tiga jenis maklumbalas rakan sebaya dalam talian; maklumbalas pembetulan, memotivasi dan grafik. Kedua, maklumbalas rakan sebaya dalam talian memberi pengalaman kepada pelajar i) meningkatkan tahap keyakinan yang lebih baik, ii) pembelajaran sendiri, iii) perbincangan antara rakan sebaya, dan iv) peluang menyemak dan mengulang yang tidak terhad. Ketiga, maklumbalas rakan sebaya dalam talian meningkatkan hubungan yang lebih baik antara pelajar dengan pendengar dengan i) kemahiran penyampaian dan pengawalan suara, ii) kemahiran bahasa dan kefasihan, dan iii) kemahiran pembentangan yang tersusun. Adalah dicadangkan agar semua pengajar pengucapan awam, guru serta jurulatih mengalami maklumbalas rakan sebaya atas talian dalam bidang pengucapan awam memandangkan kajian ini telah menyediakan cara yang inovatif dalam metodologi kemahiran pengucapan awam.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WWW	-	World Wide Web
OPF	-	Online Peer Feedback
SCT	-	Social Cognitive Theory
CALL	-	Computer-assisted Language Learning
LA	-	Language Academy
OPSC	-	Online Public Speaking Course
CLE	-	Constructivists Learning Environment
EFL	-	English as a Foreign Language

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

With the rapid development and competition of international trade, mastering effective public speaking skills is deemed necessary and becoming increasingly popular. This trend tends to be a form of empowerment (Thu and Tu, 2012; Knight, Tait, and Yorke, 2006). There is a plethora of publication highlighting the correlation between employment success and communication competency (Osborn, Osborn and Osborn, 2012). Even in a highly specialized fields such as civil and mechanical engineering, employers believe the sought after attributes include the ability to communicate technical knowledge efficiently to others along with high self-confidence and commitment to the job specifications.

However, it is saddening to learn from a considerable research that the most common problem identified by employers for unsuccessful employability of graduates leaving universities is the lack of ‘soft skills’ (public speaking is one of the skills) to function effectively at the workplace (Nurita, S. Ainon, 2004, Suan, 2004, Timbuong, 2007; Krishnamoorthy, 2007; Ranalli, 2006 and Isarji et al., 2013). The dilemma was also expressed by the former Human Resources Minister of Malaysia,

Datuk Wira Dr Fong Chan Onn in a newspaper article (Sunday Star, 2005; Chang, 2004), which was also acknowledged by the former minister of The Higher Education of Malaysia, Datuk Mustapha Mohamed (New Straits Times, June 24, 2007). Malaysian graduates lack the abilities to present ideas, explain issues and problems, speak in a constructive manner, find solutions to problems, understand challenges faced by companies and propose feasible solutions to overcome problems and that concerns the government. Thus, helping students to develop the skills of effective public speaking skills has remained a fundamental research question (Wingate, 2012). To contribute to this line of research, the current study investigated how online peer feedback might contribute to the improvement of students' public speaking performance. The study explored types of online peer feedback used by students and their experiences of using the online peer feedback. Finally, the changes experienced by the students in their public speaking performance with regard to the use of online peer feedback were explored.

This thesis in Chapter 1 begins by providing an overview of the current state of knowledge, followed by an introduction in the gap of literature, research problem, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, significance of fulfilling these objectives, conceptual framework of the study, and operational definitions of frequently used term. In the second chapter, a comprehensive review of literature is presented on the areas of public speaking performance and online peer feedback. The ultimate aim of this chapter is to provide an in-depth account of the current knowledge relevant to the research objectives. Chapter three describes and justifies the methodological approach, research design, data collection and analytical process of this research. Chapter four, five, and six present findings of this investigation and discuss the interpretation and significance of the results with reference to previous research. Ultimately, Chapter seven reviews the achievements of the study, discusses pedagogical implications of the findings, acknowledges limitations of the study, presents recommendations for further research, and concludes the thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

As the professional world becomes more dynamic and diverse, result-oriented success in this highly competitive world will depend not only on employee's professional expertise but also on their ability to present knowledge in the best manner at any public speaking sessions. Expressing ideas at staff meetings, updating recent development to peers and subordinates, pitching proposals at international meetings and presenting projects to the general public are often viewed as necessary skills in the working world. There is a need to have good communication and interpersonal skills that highlight "intellectual values and academic skills" of an individual (Morita, 2004, p. 81), promote positive self-image and marketability of oneself (Mottet, 2006; Anyadubalu, 2010). Based on Government Employability Blueprint for the year 2012-2017, about 180,000 students graduate with diplomas and degrees from institutions of higher learning in Malaysia each year (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2012-2017) and graduates often face employer rejection when seeking employment due to lack of soft skills (public speaking as one of the skills) (Nurita, S. Ainon, 2004; Suan, 2004; Ambigapathy and Aniswal, 2005)

Lack of communication skills (public speaking included) arises due to psychological differences that exist when one presents a speech in public using a foreign language as compared to speaking for casual communication. It is daunting to present a speech publicly because the social nature of second language learning where a person's identity is always reflected from the use of the language and "exposing language imperfections in front of others, person's self-image make one more vulnerable, and this leads to anxiety" (Arnold, 2003, p. 2 in Kavaliauskiene, Anusienė and Mažeikienė, 2006). Among the reasons for anxiety in public speaking is the unfamiliar situation or setting, feeling of loneliness, self-consciousness, fear of making mistakes and feelings of being judged by others (Lucas, 2011). Besides that, students face various difficulties especially the kinesics that includes giving a speech while remembering to use eye contact, proper tone, gestures and vocal variety (Knapp, Hall and Horgan, 2013). All these will diminish eventually the confidence level and de-motivate the presenter if not controlled (Marshall et al. (2015). Thus,

teachers or instructors of language have the responsibility to train students to achieve competency in public speaking skills.

To train students to achieve competency in public speaking is not an easy task. Teachers have to ensure students meet the acceptable criteria for structuring a speech. These include 1) organization of speech with proper introduction and conclusion, clear ideas and objectives, 2) delivery with proper eye contact, posture and gestures; and 3) language with accurate grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation (Lucas, 2011). Based on principles of good teaching by Chickering and Gamson (1987) acknowledged to date, standards of good practice include developing clear organization and presentation of new knowledge, creating meaningful and relevant context for learning, communicating enthusiasm for the subject, and emphasizing fairness between students. If speakers are well equipped with these skills, they have the ability to persuade, inform audiences or participate in any situations impressively (Murugesan, 2005). However, knowing the essentials alone does not guarantee successful presentation because students need to be trained and have to learn public speaking by experiencing the process (Webb, 2008). Thus, there is a necessity for methodological paradigm shift of existing public speaking course.

Reviewing traditional methodology of public speaking course appears to highlight a heavy dependence on textbooks by teachers (Cantwell, 2005). Due to this dependence, students get very little experience of actual public speaking although these textbooks state practice is an essential tool to become a proficient public speaker (Levasseur, et al, 2004). One way to ensure quality and meaningful presentation is to provide practice sessions for public speaking learners as well as practice sessions that should be as authentic as possible (Sprague and Stuart, 2005; Smith and Frymier, 2006). Fortunately, with new innovations, the inclusion of technology in education has brought improvements to the methodology of teaching public speaking skills. The methodology goes beyond normal traditional classroom with textbooks and teacher-talk method. The new form of technology-supported instruction using the Internet or the World Wide Web as the medium provides a more flexible delivery mode in public speaking methodology. Besides that, it provides

more opportunities for students to have infinite practice sessions and to share and receive helpful feedback to one another during the course. The integration of peer feedback in an online environment during the students' practice sessions has added value to the teaching methodology of public speaking skills.

Providing constructive and effective feedback at the end of each public speaking presentations is important. Without feedback a learner is most likely to recycle past achievements and errors rather than create new insight, ability and competence (Narciss, 2008). According to Smith and King (2004), feedback in public speaking situations gives information to the speaker about the audience's reaction to the speech, offers suggestions for improvement in future speeches, motivates the speaker to continue and enjoy speaking experience and finally develops self-confidence. Feedback in the past, was provided by teachers. However, now with the wide application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) feedback can come from teachers, peers, own self, or qualified experts in the field of public speaking (Hénard and Roseveare, 2012). Specific, prompt and challenging feedback is required to enhance students' public speaking performance.

From an epistemological perspective, online peer feedback in learning public speaking skills is aligned with Vygotsky's Social Constructivists Theory. Social constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed through interactions in a social system and meaning is constructed through activities carried out in that system (Roberts, 2006). According to Lin, Liu and Yuan (2001), students' progress beyond the cognitive processes required for completing a given task since they have to "read, compare, or question ideas, suggest modifications, or even reflect on how well one's own performance is compared with others" (p. 248). This is in-line with the Social Constructivists' notion of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is "can do with help" (Nutbrown, Clough and Atherton, 2013) where learner moves from a stage of not knowing to a stage of being able to do something on his own. As a person develops cognitively, gains experience, and builds social awareness, personal standards are formed. These personal standards guide and out of countenance expectations motivate them. Because learning is essentially a social phenomenon,

learners are partially motivated by incentives, which may come in the form of moral incentives provided by the knowledge community.

In general, online peer feedback encourages interactive construction of own knowledge for lifelong learning, which results in increased interactions among students. This encourages sharing of knowledge and ultimately leads to improved learning. Even though great progress has been made in this area, research gaps do still exist. Thus, incorporating peer feedback in an online setting improves learners' public speaking performance and the types of peer feedback students use to help one another in their presentation via online as well as the manner in which these different types of peer feedback improve their public speaking skills, requires investigation.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This section provides a description of the issues addressed by the current study. As explained in the background of the study, public speaking instruction has undergone changes from a traditional face-to-face, textbook based instruction to a more up-to-date, online-based instruction (Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich and York, 2006; Liu and Lee, 2013). Thus, significant changes in the students' activities and responsibilities need to be addressed in-line with the development of the new methodology of public speaking (Liu and Lee, 2013). Researchers have suggested that for students' to improve public speaking, the essentials of public speaking (Organization, Delivery and Voice Control and Language and Proficiency skills) with relevant contents of these essential skills (Refer Figure 4.1) should be acquired by students. This will assist students to offer correct, suitable and appropriate feedback to peers (Hamilton, 2011; Lucas, 2011). Besides, previous findings and suggestions of past researches shared that, in an ideal online public speaking course, peer feedback should be practiced. Proper use of peer feedback has been

demonstrated to be one of the effective strategies to improve students' public speaking performance especially in an online environment.

Online peer feedback environment is an ideal environment for public speaking course. There is little research integrating online peer feedback in an online environment. Majority of previous research focused only on particular aspects of public speaking skills. Ertmer, et al. (2006) state that although there has been progress in determining ways feedback can best be used under certain conditions, there are still many areas the literature feedback are inconsistent and unexplored. Very few studies (Sadler, 2010; Tseng and Tsai, 2010; Papinezak, Young and Groves, 2007) were conducted to examine the use of peer feedback in an online environment. Most of the emphasis has been put on written feedback especially in writing classes (Kumar, Kumar and Feryok, 2009; Wingate, 2012; Mory, 2004).

Besides that, current understanding of the online peer feedback types used in public speaking instruction is inadequate and has raised questions related to the types of online peer feedback students use, changes in students' public speaking performance and students experiences using online peer feedback in public speaking course. Answers to these questions could help teachers and language instructors consider providing online peer feedback in a public speaking course.

To contribute to the existing knowledge of online peer feedback in public speaking instruction, this study studied a total of 23 non-native students using online peer feedback in the process of improving their public speaking performance. During this process, feedback provided by peers on the public speaking video excerpts of each individual student helped them discover the gaps between what they presented and what they needed to produce for an effective speech. In this process of discovery, the peers suggested areas for improvement in their speech performance by offering various types of feedback. All these interactions were done in the Online Public Speaking Course (OPSC) website to allow revisions and re-uploading of improved public speaking performance. They also had discussions with peers regarding the

suggested changes. This study also observed the changes in the students' public speaking performance and gained knowledge regarding their experiences of using the online peer feedback in improving public speaking performance.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This investigation was conducted to understand how online peer feedback contributes to the improvement of students' public speaking performance. The participants drawn by random cluster sampling were enrolled in a 2-credit course of Effective Oral Communication Skills programme (course code:UHB 3152) in which public speaking is an elective English proficiency programme offered to undergraduates as a requirement for graduation from the university. This programme focuses on practice of prepared public speeches with appropriate organisation, delivery and voice control as well as language and proficiency. The study investigated peer feedback and not teacher feedback. All the peer feedbacks were placed within a virtual environment called the Online Public Speaking Course (OPSC), a website developed for the purpose of investigating the objectives of the study. Twenty-three respondents videotaped themselves presenting the assigned speeches and uploaded their recorded speeches to the OPSC website for peers to evaluate and offer online peer feedback for a duration of five weeks. This qualitative study fuses a phenomenological design since the study was interested to examine the participants' lived experiences of using the online peer feedback to improve their public speaking performance. Instruments used to collect data were online peer feedback records, students' journal entries, public speaking video excerpts and focus group interviews.

Participants of the study were students learning public speaking who might have the feeling of uneasiness and anxiety speaking in public, thus the confidentiality

of their speeches was significant. This was one of the reasons Online Public Speaking Course (OPSC) website was used as this environment is password-protected and can limit the number of users. The study investigated the public speaking skills of the participants and not any of the other oral communication skills.

The study looked at various types of online peer feedback in the students' interaction in the OPSC website and how these feedbacks improved public speaking performances. Students' voices and experiences of using online peer feedback were gathered through journal entries and interviews before they were linked with types of online peer feedback to highlight the changes that occurred in their public speaking performance. The present study captured the public speaking performance of selected respondents of UHB 3152-Effective Oral Communication Skills programme, and the results found could not be generalized to the population outside the university under investigation.

1.5 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research are as follows:-

1. To investigate types of online peer feedback students use to improve their public speaking performance within an Online Public Speaking Course environment
2. To examine students' experiences of online peer feedback to improve their public speaking performance within the Online Public Speaking Course website
3. To observe the changes in students' public speaking performance with regards to using online peer feedback within the Online Public Speaking Course environment

1.6 Research Questions

Based on the mentioned objectives, this study seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the types of online peer feedback students use to improve their public speaking performance within an Online Public Speaking Course environment?
2. What are the students' experiences of online peer feedback to improve their public speaking performance within an Online Public Speaking Course?
3. In what ways do students change in the public speaking performance with regards to using online peer feedback within an Online Public Speaking Course environment?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This section describes the importance of conducting this current study. It discusses the rational and relevance of the study to existing conditions. Besides that, it explains how faculty members and English Language centers of universities can benefit from the results of this study. Additionally, the study provides possible contributions to the state of knowledge and expected implications.

As explained earlier, this study aimed at providing options for ample practicing ground in the acquisition of public speaking skills. In this online environment, students worked independently downloading notes and viewing input videos on various effective public speaking skills. Then, the students practiced

speaking as many times as they like before recording and uploading videos of their public speaking performance to the OPSC website for other members or peers in the course to view and suggest constructive feedback. Furthermore, the tasks of acquiring public speaking skills depend on the individual student's commitment to the tasks. The students explored the OPSC website, which is equipped with input on various skills of effective public speaking. The peers also provided assistance through the usage of online peer feedback. These students were trained to gain skills and knowledge independently when using the online peer feedback in the OPSC website.

Online peer feedback shared among students helped them to improve public speaking skills. These feedbacks assisted in highlighting a speaker's strengths and weaknesses in public speaking performance. Feedback was offered and received based on the various types of feedback (Pyke and Sherlock, 2010). As a result, the efficacy of different types of online peer feedback in nurturing changes to students' public speaking performance.

Results of this study are expected to benefit Language Academy members and English language centers of universities. Coordinators of programmes, supervisors and course designers are expected to gain a comprehensive understanding of providing online peer feedback for students acquiring public speaking skills. Additionally, teachers could also benefit from the results of the study so that they can help and train their students using effective types of peer feedback in public speaking courses.

Findings of this study are expected to inform language centers of universities that there is a need to redefine public speaking courses. In fact, this study informs that students need a new methodology of acquiring public speaking skills. They need constant systematic, clear and effective method of providing feedback for their performance. Such ongoing assistance could develop not only good speakers in public speaking, but also experts in the field of public speaking.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a written or visual presentation that explains the key concepts and factors and the tentative relationship among them (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p:18). Figure 1.1 on the next page illustrates the conceptual framework of the study.

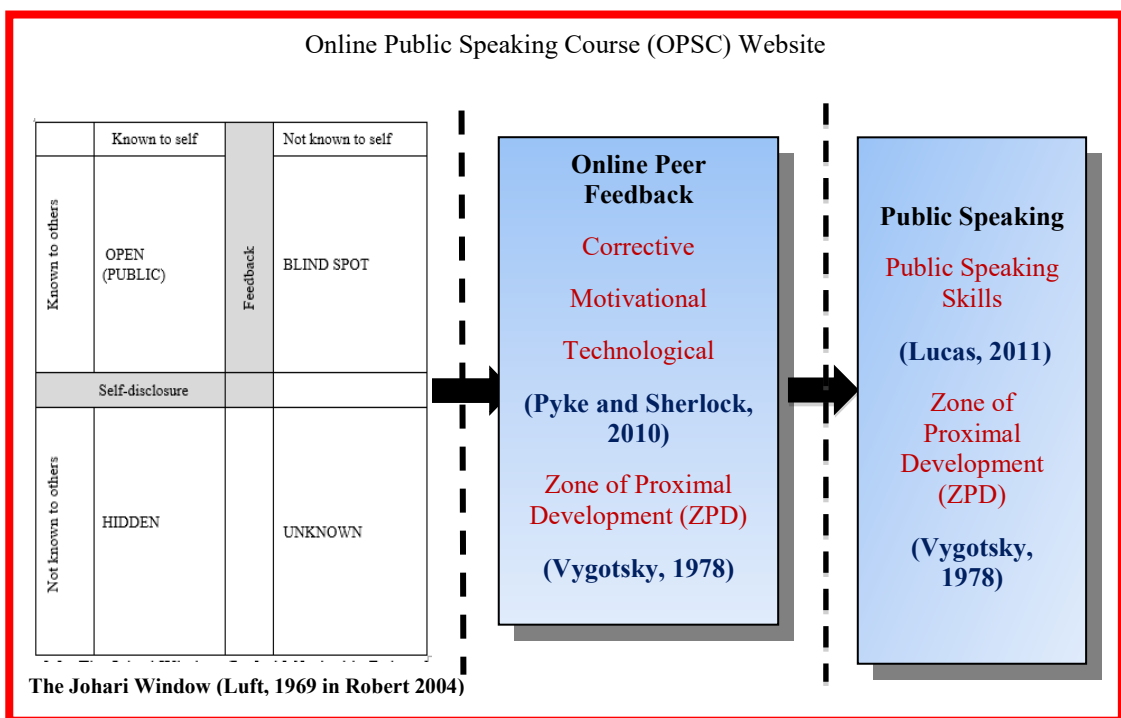


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1.1 shows that there are three main concepts (The Johari Window, The Online Peer Feedback and Public Speaking) in this study. The concept of Johari's Window (Luft, 1969 in Robert 2004) sets the foundation of the whole study. The Johari's Window is a communication model which emphasizes the importance of feedback from others to learn about oneself. It is by receiving feedback from others that the 'Blind spot' of a speaker will be reduced, and the 'Open' area will be expanded. In this study, The Johari's Window is conceptualized as a medium where students improve their public speaking performance by receiving and offering online

peer feedback. Students realize their strengths and weaknesses in public speaking from the feedback they receive from peers. Peers strive to help each other to expand the 'Open' area by offering constructive feedback. The size of the 'Open' area can also be expanded towards 'Hidden' window as peers disclose information on strengths and weaknesses to one another. Offering and receiving constructive feedback build better and more trusting relationships with one another, solve issues, and work more effectively as a team.

However, feedback must be offered constructively to ensure improved performance. The present study adopts Pyke and Sherlork's (2010) peer feedback framework to provide clear distinction of the various types of feedback (Corrective, Motivational and Technological feedback) in an online environment. As a result of this constructive feedback process, students make changes to the public speaking performance. Thus, the concept of using proper online peer feedback broadens the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) can be materialized.

In the Online Public Speaking Course (OPSC) website, students prepare speeches independently based on the guidelines of using effective public speaking skills prescribed by Lucas (2011) in the book 'The Arts of Public Speaking'. Lucas (2011) emphasizes three main skills in the speech; i) Organization, ii) Delivery and Voice Control and iii) Language and Proficiency. Each of the main skills consist sub-skills or contents to guide a speaker for effective public speaking. The contents for organization of speech consists of 'Topic Selection', 'Introduction of the Speech', 'Main Ideas presented in the Speech', 'Transitional Markers used to move from one idea to another' and 'Conclusion of the Speech'. Contents of Delivery and Voice Control involves looking into aspects of Vitality', 'Enthusiasm' 'Posture', 'Gesture', 'Facial Expression', 'Eye Contact', 'Rapport with the audience', 'Volume', 'Rate of the speech'. Finally, the contents of Language and Proficiency are 'Fluency', 'Communication of Message', 'Vocabulary', 'Grammar' and 'Pronunciation'. In this study, students prepared and presented their speech in the OPSC website. Students sought their own knowledge related to the essentials of public speaking by viewing the input video excerpts and downloadable notes

equipped in the OPSC website. Constructing own knowledge based on the provided input is emphasized in the Theory of Constructivists.

In a Constructivists environment with the usage of online peer feedback (Pyke and Sherlock, 2010) reduces the ‘Blind Spot’ in The Johari Window and broadens the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) of the students. The improvement in the students’ public speaking performance is projected in the students’ subsequent speeches. As a result of the whole concept, continuous and correct use of online peer feedback in a public speaking course improve the students’ public speaking performance

1.9 Definitions of Terms

1.9.1 Public Speaking

A type of communication in which a speaker delivers a message with a specific purpose to an audience (O’ Hair, Rubenstein, and Stewart, 2007). It is sometimes used to inform, persuade or entertain (Lucas, 2011; Evans et al., 2004). In the present study, public speaking is defined as a way of expressing ideas public by sharing them with other people and to influence other people. (Lucas, 2009). The public speaking course was conducted via Online Public Speaking Course (OPSC) website. All the required input and exercises for students to acquire the skills of effective public speaking skills are made available in the website. This course is conducted asynchronously since students communicate and learn public

speaking skills at their own convenient time and place. Students' performances in public speaking skills were investigated.

1.9.2 Performance in Public Speaking

For the purpose of the study, 'performance in public speaking' means a speaker is able to impart ideas and messages to the listeners through good and acceptable language, delivery and voice control as well as organization (Lucas, 2011; Marshall et al., 2015). Delivery and voice control involve enthusiasm, posture, gestures, eye-contact, facial expressions, rate of speech with the audience. Organization include clear topic, effective introduction, previewed main ideas, memorable conclusion and also appropriate transitions to link ideas. Language proficiency takes into consideration fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation (Lucas, 2011; Marshall et al., 2015).

1.9.3 Peer Feedback

Peer Feedback is a process in which students engage in reflective criticism of the work or performance of other students using previously identified criteria and supply feedback to them (Falchikov, 1986; Liu and Hansen, 2002). In this study, students take up the role of a teacher by analyzing, offering, receiving and sharing comments, opinions and suggestions about their peers' public speaking performance which is uploaded within a web-based platform known as the Online Public Speaking Course (OPSC) website to improve public speaking performance.

1.9.4 Online Peer Feedback (OPF)

For the purpose of this study, online peer feedback is defined as an instructional strategy aimed at fostering interaction among students which is expected to contribute to the improvement of quality of the public speaking performance. Learners observe each other's performance, suggest improvement and give feedback and comments in an asynchronous online environment with the support of an internet system. Thus, it is an instructional strategy where students work together in groups to provide each other with information that either confirms what they already know or change their existing knowledge and beliefs to promote student-centered learning (Mory, 2004; Topping, 2010; Jacobs and Zhang, 1989 cited in Huynh, 2008) in a virtual environment.

1.9.5 Corrective feedback

Corrective feedback refers to the information given by an evaluator about a learner's performance and aims to increase learning through error correction which is specifically for task performance (Mory, 2004). The feedback highlights the learner what needs to be improved to move forward in the learning process. In this study, the operational definition from Pyke and Sherlock is adopted. It focuses on the content of learning activities and aims to reinforce or correct learner performance through acknowledging the correct actions or answers of learners, provides guidance to improve learner understanding, offer correct answers or explanations, or suggest that a learner repeats activity.

1.9.6 Motivational feedback

Motivational feedback aims to motivate or encourage a learner to perform a task. It is offered to reorient the learner to the goal of learning without emphasizing the performance of the learner. It does not give guidance on how to improve learning but rather makes the learner feel good on the task performed. This type of feedback helps learner as part of “continuing effort despite challenges and setbacks” (Sales, 1993) and helps learner gain “a sense of control over the learning” (Hoska, 1993). This will eventually motivate the learner to engage in the learning process. In this study, as conceptualized by Pyke and Sherlock (2010), motivational feedback helps motivate students to continue participating and performing despite weaknesses in presentation. This feedback motivates a learner to meet learning goals and face challenges, improves a learner’s resilience, and creates a sense of control and ownership in learning.

1.9.7 Technological feedback

Technology feedback is described as dealing with technological support issues related to software, hardware, and web-based learning. It is the feedback given to a learner to navigate the system in order to experience a comfortable learning environment. It has no direct instructional role but it is considered an important type of feedback. (Pyke and Sherlock, 2010)

1.9.8 Graphical Feedback

Graphical feedback is a representation of facial expression such as a smile or frowns, formed by various combinations of keyboard characters and used in electronic communications to convey a writer's feelings or intended tone (Vedantam, 2006, Horgan and Smith, 2006). The “Graphical representation” (Walther and D’Addario, 2001, p.324) of feelings and facial expressions, delivers emotional rather than task-oriented information (Ganster, Eimler and Kramer, 2012) and indexes a user’s affective stance (Park, 2007). In this study, graphical feedback is a newly discovered feedback type and needs further investigation.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted and identified the issue of online peer feedback in public speaking for graduates. It was argued that online peer feedback should be adopted and practiced in public speaking courses to assist students in improving their public speaking skills. Integrating online peer feedback in a public speaking course was expected to provide students with a platform to help, suggest, correct and motivate each other to eliminate nervousness and anxiety facing the audience and provide ample practicing platform for students. Moreover, the types of peer feedback students use in a Social Constructivists (Vygotsky, 1982) environment was expected to widen the comfort zone of the students (Zone of Proximal Development) and eventually contribute in the improvement of the students’ public speaking performance. Additionally, this was expected to reduce, if not eliminate, the ‘Blind Spot’ that one has in public speaking performance. Finally, this study was expected to create awareness to teachers and students on the benefits of integrating online peer feedback and how certain types of peer feedback, would improve students’ public speaking performance. The following chapter provides an in-depth account of the literature and theories that led to framing the objectives discussed in this introductory chapter.

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